

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /026 W

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P 301616Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5051

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 4264

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, LE, SY

SUBJECT: SHIHABI DISCUSSES LEBANESE SITUATION

1. DISCUSSED CONTINUED LEBANESE CONFLICT WITH COS SHIHABI
OCTOBER 29. SHIHABI GLOOMILY SAID HE FORESAW NO EARLY END
TO FIGHTING, OPPONENTS APPARENTLY HAD TO TIRE THEMSELVES OUT.
COMBATANTS WERE SHOWING NO AWARENESS OF HOW
THEY ARE DESTROYING THEIR OWN COUNTRY. I TOOK
OCCASION TO EXPRESS CONCERN ABOUT REPORTS OF CONTINUED
FLOW OF WEAPONS INTO LEBANON WHICH WAS PROLONGING
THE TRAGEDY AS WELL AS ADDING TO ANARCHY BY RAPIDLY ERODING
AUTHORITY OF LEBANON'S LEADERS OVER THEIR TRADITIONAL
FOLLOWERS. REMINDED HIM SEVERAL MONTHS AGO I HAD EXPRESSED
OUR CONCERN ABOUT LACK OF CONTROL OVER SAM-7 MISSILES.
ALTHOUGH THAT WEAPON WAS NOT CURRENTLY IN PLAY, IT APPEARED
TO ME SUPPLIES OF OTHER WEAPONS COMING FROM SYRIA WERE NOT REMAIN-
ING UNDER CONTROL OF THEIR INTENDED RECEIPIENTS, WHETHER IN SAIQA
OR WHATEVER OTHER ORGANIZATIONS SYRIA MIGHT BE DIRECTLY
SUPPORTING. SHIHABI ACKNOWLEDGED THIS AND SAID THAT
INDIVIDUALS EITHER IN SEARCH OF PERSONAL PROFIT
OR TO INCREASE THEIR OWN POLITICAL INFLUENCE WERE SELLING
OR OTHERWISE DISTRIBUTING WEAPONS BEYOND LIMITS SYRIA HAD
INTENDED.

2. HE REITERATED EARLIER ASSERTION BY MILITARY INTELLIGENCE
CHIEF ALI DUBA TO ME THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO COMMITMENT OF
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MAJOR ELEMENTS OF SAIQA OR FATAH TO THE BATTLE IN RECENT

DAYS (DAMASCUS 4219).

3. FOUND GENERAL SHORT OF IDEAS OF WHAT MIGHT BE
DONE NEXT. I SAID WE REMAINED IN CONSTANT CONTACT WITH
LEBANESE LEADERSHIP ENCOURAGING END TO FIGHTING AND POLITICAL
RECONCILIATION. THIS I CONSIDERED FULLY
CONSONANT WITH WHAT SYRIANS HAD TOLD US THEY WERE COUNSELING
LEBANESE. DID SHIHABI HAVE ANY SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS RE
US ROLE? REPLIED HE BELIEVED US COULD
PLAY MORE ACTIVE
ROLE IN COUNSELING RESTRAINT TO EXTREMIST MARONITES. I
SAID WE HAD MADE AMPLY CLEAR OUR DISTANCE FROM THAT GROUP.
HE REPLIED IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF US COULD FIND WAY TO
MAKE MORE PUBLIC ITS LACK OF SUPPORT FOR HARDLINE CHRISTIANS,
WHICH SECRETARY SET FORTH IN HIS MOST RECENT MESSAGE TO
PRESIDENT ASAD. US SHOULD PLAY PRIMARY ROLE IN THIS MATTER,
WITH FRANCE AND WESTERN EUROPE FOLLOWING UP. OUR UNDER-
TAKING THIS ROLE WOULD BE COMPLEMENTARY TO EFFORTS
SYRIA WAS MAKING VIS-A-VIS EXTREMISTS IN MOSLEM AND
PALESTINIAN CAMPS.
MURPHY

SECRET

NNN

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